

32 Ten 'Chargers' in a 1909 film! Has it survived anywhere?

by Dr Douglas J Austin 32 [TWC 28(4) p28 2011]

While browsing the 'Paperspast' web-site (<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>), which leads to almost 20 million articles from New Zealand newspapers from 1839-1945, I was astonished to find the following article on the front page of "THE GREY RIVER ARGUS" for Wednesday, September 28th 1910. It appears to derive from a pamphlet, which I have not yet located. I have excised the extracts of Kipling and Tennyson poetry and have added some italicised notes. This remarkable film is listed as "Balaclava Fund" (distributed by Gaumont in 1910) in Denis Gifford's comprehensive "The British Film Catalogue: Non-Fiction Film 1884-1994", Routledge, 2001. It was certainly shown in Australia (Sidney, Melbourne and Adelaide) and New Zealand during March and April, 1910. Given the amazing survival of Mitchell and Kenyon's films from 1899-1913, dare we hope that this unique record may still exist?

"THE LAST MUSTER".

Tonight at the Public Hall Mr Pollard displays a film that the lovers of all that is dashing brave and courageous, added to the wish to help those who have risked so much the name of our English soldiers will be most interesting. A review of the circumstances surrounding the movement and a description of the picture itself copied from a Home paper [Not identified] will not be out of place. FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR T. H. ROBERTS' BALACLAVA SURVIVORS' FUND. (Patron: Her Majesty the Queen.)

"All that was left of them,
Left of Six Hundred."

On the 55th Anniversary of the Balaclava Light Brigade Charge [25th October, 1909], by special arrangement with Mr T. H. Roberts, whose praiseworthy efforts to help and support these old veterans in their latter days, are well known, we assembled a considerable party of the gallant old warriors in our studio and obtained living portraits of them to hand down to posterity. These brave old men, many of them decrepit, lent themselves willingly to the work in hand under the care and guidance of Mr T. H. Roberts. It was explained to them that they were taking the trouble not for themselves alone, but for the benefit of the above Fund and their Comrades, for whom so much has been done by the Fund. We wish to state plainly here, the direct object of this film is to assist that Fund, and that every exhibitor who shows it will be rendering a service to these old heroes by assisting them to pass their declining days in comfort. Every penny paid to us for the exhibition of this film will directly benefit Mr T. H. Roberts' Balaclava Survivors' Fund. Apart from its charitable object, this is a film which cannot fail to appeal to every class and section of the British public. No words of ours are necessary to recall the stirring heroism of the "Light Brigade" in their famous "Charge," nor to paint the pathos of seeing the lusty young fellows who dared death 55 years ago now gathered together in their extreme old age to celebrate the Anniversary. When Mr Roberts's Fund was started, the plight of many of these old veterans was terrible. England has rarely been grateful enough to her old soldiers, and Mr Roberts found many of these old men in the Workhouse or in the direst poverty or starvation. Since that time, as far as the Fund would permit, their circumstances have been relieved, and those who have died, have been buried at the Fund's expense. The exhibitor who books and exhibits this film will be doing himself an excellent turn, and what better subject or nobler scene could be placed before his patrons? Further he will have the satisfaction of assisting to support with some degree of comfort, men ranging from 78 to 87 years of age who fought our country's battles before most of us were born.

The film opens with a brief picture of Lord Cardigan, their gallant leader, as he appeared on the day of the Charge, 25th of October, 1854 (taken from a still picture). This is followed by a group of the old men standing to attention in the last feeble muster, and saluting the audience. In the succeeding sections, two or three brief and somewhat shaky movements of drill are gone through, and we realise that more than one of the brave old chaps is somewhat "tottery on his pins." These evolutions, however, enable us to get a clear idea of the stamp of man who made England's name famous in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny 50 years ago. The next section of the film is a brief view of Mr Dewar's celebrated picture reproduced on this pamphlet. Following we have direct

large size head and shoulder portraits, preceded by a title giving each man's name, rank and record which are as follows:-

THE FATHER OF THEM ALL.

1. - **Sergt. John Brooks.** Age 87. Enlisted Westminster, June 23rd, 1842, 3rd Light Dragoons. Present at the Battles of Moodkie, Ferozeshah, Sobraon, Ramnugger, Ludolapore, Chillianwallah and Goojerat. Volunteered in 1854 into the 13th Light Dragoons for the Crimea. Present at Alma and severely wounded at Balaclava. [1516 Private : Died 28/02/1911]
 2. - **Sergt. Jones.** Aged 84. 4th Light Dragoons. Crimean and Turkish Medals, Clasps for Alma, Balaclava and Sebastopol. [1349 Private: Died 31/08/1912]
 3. - **Sergt. Parkinson.** Aged 76. 11th Hussars. Crimean, Indian Mutiny and Turkish Medals. Clasps for Alma, Balaclava, Sebastopol and Inkerman, Bronze Medal [Not identified] for Light Brigade Charge. [1521 Private : Died 12/01/1917]
 4. - **Sergt. James Mustard.** Age 80. 17th Lancers. Indian Mutiny, Crimean and Turkish Medals, Clasps for Sebastopol, Balaclava and Alma. [1149 Private : Died 04/02/1916]
 5. - **Sergt. W. H. Spring.** Age 83. 11th Hussars. Crimean and Turkish Medals, Clasps for Sebastopol, Balaclava and Alma. [1608 Private : Died 20/08/1912]
 6. - **Sergt. Edward Hindley.** Age 78. 13th Light Dragoons and 7th Hussars. Crimean and Turkish, also Indian Mutiny Medals, Clasps for Relief of Lucknow, Sebastopol, Balaclava and Alma. [1540 Private : Died 16/12/1911]
 7. - **Sergt. John Ford.** Age 78. 4th Light Dragoons. Crimean and Turkish Medals. Clasps for Balaclava, Inkermann, Alma and Sebastopol. [1547 Private : Died 02/08/1911]
 - 8 - **Sergt. D. Briers.** Age 78. 11th Hussars. Crimean and Turkish Medals, Clasps for Alma, Balaclava, Inkermann and Sebastopol. [1539 Private : Died 04/10/1912]
- At the end of this section is a reproduction of Hillingford's famous picture of the charge itself.
9. - **Sergt. H. Wilsden.** Age 86. 4th Light Dragoons. Crimean and Turkish Medals. Clasps for Sebastopol, Inkermann and Balaclava. [1361 Private : Died 27/02/1916]
 10. - **Sergt. H. Herbert.** Aged 76. 4th Light Dragoons. Crimean and Turkish Medals. Clasps for Sebastopol, Inkermann, Balaclava and Alma. [1460 Private : Died 14/10/1912]

Following this is a reproduction, by kind permission of the Fine Art Society, of 148, New Bond Street, London W., of Lady Butler's famous picture "After Balaclava". We see the picture first of all filling the screen, and then we see the old men explaining and identifying the features of it to a boy, one of the younger generation, in whom they are inculcating the lesson of duty and self-sacrifice which they had learnt so well. Finally we have the old men filing before a portrait of the King (reproduction by kind permission of W. and D. Downey) and saluting their King and Emperor. The picture concludes with the veterans giving three rousing cheers for His Majesty. Of course, I have searched a great many film archives world-wide, but with no success to date. Should any reader find this film intact, I shall be the first to applaud him/her - and the first to ask for a copy!

